

of which they complain. The burning postherpetic pain will probably get relief, but the neuralgic pain, in our experience, is not benefited by posterior pituitary extract. We have not found that the pain in supraorbital zoster during the acute stages is any more resistant to the pituitrin treatment than zoster of any other part of the body where the skin is of approximately the same thickness. However, supraorbital zoster frequently goes on very rapidly to formation of vesicles, and when this has occurred, healing is delayed and scarring is apt to follow. This again emphasizes the importance of early treatment.

THE LURE OF MEDICAL HISTORY*

THE FIRST SUTURE OF A BLOOD VESSEL†

By FREDERICK A. FENDER, M.D.
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THOUGH the report of the first successful suture of a blood vessel in man is often cited, it is quoted rarely and appears to have been seldom read. The feat that occasioned the report, the closure of a ruptured aneurysm, becomes noteworthy when one realizes that more than one hundred years elapsed before it was duplicated. The suture was carried out by Mr. Hallowell, a surgeon of Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1759, and reported to Dr. William Hunter in a letter from Mr. Lambert (Figure 1) two years later, Hallowell meanwhile having died. Hunter made the letter public at a meeting of "A Society of Physicians in London." The communication is not long, and is perhaps worth reading in full. The method of suture, "as in the harelip," is illustrated in Figure 2.

"The case of the Aneurysm was indeed curious, and, I am in hopes, will prove useful; but I must not be too sanguine in its favour, till I have seen the effects of such an operation confirmed by several instances; till then, I would not be fond of saying anything of it in print, except you think, that as few of these injuries fall to any single man's share in the ordinary course of business, it would, by that means, afford a larger field to put others upon the tryal, so as to introduce the method sooner.

"If this be your opinion, I have no objection to giving any short account of it you may think proper. The history of it was thus:

"I had very carefully attended to the cure of three Aneurysms, for which the operation was performed by my late worthy friend and colleague, Mr. Hallowell. In one of them, after the operation was performed in the common way, by a ligature above and below the aperture in the artery, such violent pain and swelling, and inflammation, came on, as to threaten a gangrene. Bleedings, fomentations, poultices, &c. mitigated these symptoms; a plentiful suppuration ensued; the wound gradually healed, and the patient was discharged from the hospital with a weak arm, and a pulse much weaker in that wrist than in the other. This case, in particular, made me turn my mind to the operation for the Aneurysm, and made me wish to see it done with some alteration in the method, so as to make less disturbance in the circulation of the part. I recollected all that I had seen or read of the effects of styptics,

*A Twenty-Five Years Ago column, made up of excerpts from the official Journal of the California Medical Association of twenty-five years ago, is printed in each issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE. The column is one of the regular features of the Miscellany Department, and its page number will be found on the front cover.

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360 Medical Observations and Inquiries.

XXX. *Extract of a letter from Mr. Lambert, surgeon at Newcastle upon Tyne, to Dr. Hunter; giving an Account of a new Method of treating an Aneurysm. Read June 15, 1761.*

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If this be your opinion, I have no objection to your giving any short account of it you may think proper. The history of it was thus:

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Fig. 1.—First page of Lambert's report of the first successful suture of a blood vessel in man.

of pressure, and of ligatures in the cure of hemorrhages. I considered the coats and motions of arteries, and compared their wounds with the wounds of veins and other parts. I reflected upon the process of nature in the cure of wounds in general, and considered in particular, how the union of divided parts was brought about in the operation of the hare-lip, and in horses necks that are bled by farriers. Upon the whole, I was in hopes that a suture of the wound in the artery might be successful; and if so, it would certainly be preferable to tying up the trunk of the vessel. I communicated my thoughts to Mr. Hallowell, Mr. Keenlyside, and some other friends of the profession. A case of an Aneurysm from bleeding occurred, and fell to Mr. Hallowell's lot. I recommended the method I have hinted. He put it in execution June 15, 1759. Everything was done in the usual method, till the artery was laid bare, and its wound discovered; and the tourniquet being now slackened, the gush of blood *per saltum* shewed there was no deception. Next, two ligatures, one above the orifice, and one below, were passed under the artery, that they might be ready to be tied at any time, in case the method proposed should fail. Then a small steel pin, rather more than a quarter of an inch long, was passed through the two lips of the wound in the artery, and secured by twisting a thread round it, as in the hare-lip. This was found to stop the bleeding;

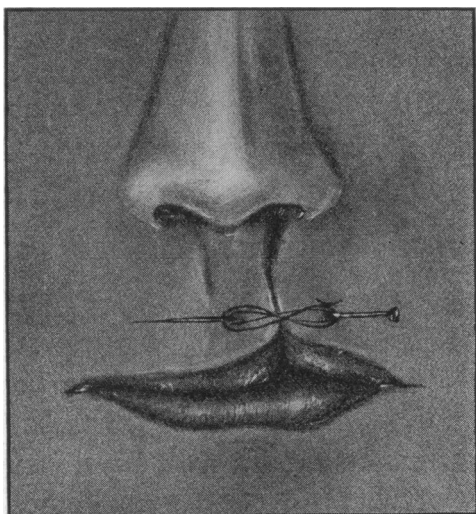


Fig. 2.—Method of suture of harelip referred to by Lambert. The edges were freshened, a long pin passed through both, and a ligature wound about the exposed ends of the pin in "figure-of-eight" fashion.

upon which the arm was bound up, the patient put to bed, and ordered to be kept quiet, &c. as usual in such cases. The wound was first dressed on the fourth day, viz. June 18. It looked well for the time, and continued to heal, without interruption, in a kindly manner. The pin came away with the dressings June 29, that is, on the fourteenth day; and on the 7th of July every part was healed, except what was kept open by the two ligatures, which remained loose in the flesh like two setons. These were therefore removed. In a few days after this, the wound was completely cicatrized; and July 19, the patient was discharged from the hospital perfectly well, and with a pulse in that arm nearly as strong as in the other. Indeed, the pulse was very little altered immediately after the operation; it was weakened in a small degree, as might be expected from the diameter of the vessel being straightened; but it was so strong and equal, that we had not the least doubt of the blood's continuing to circulate freely through it.

"If it should be found by experience, that a large artery, when wounded, may be healed up by this kind of suture, without becoming impervious, it would be an important discovery in surgery. It would make the operation for the Aneurysm still more successful in the arm, when the main trunk is wounded; and by this method, perhaps, we might be able to cure the wounds of some arteries that would otherwise require amputation, or be altogether incurable."

Lambert's hopes were not to receive early fulfillment. About ten years later, after extensive and painstaking animal experimentation, Assmann of Gronigen decided that the suture of arteries was not feasible. The project lay almost untouched for a hundred years, the importance of infection, the greatest obstacle to success, not being appreciated during the interval. Interest was reawakened by the experiments of Gluck in 1883. A few years later, with the advent of more radical surgery in Germany came, inevitably, accidents to large vessels and a new impetus to vascular surgery in man. The trail leads from this point, by way of significant American contributions, to Dörfler, Carrel and Guthrie, who may be said to be responsible for the accepted techniques of today.

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THE HEALTH FOUNDATION FOR RECOVERY†

By HAVEN EMERSON, M.D.
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II*

INFLUENCE OF RECENT MEDICAL DISCOVERIES ON PRESENT-DAY LIVING

AND what is a reasonable and probable explanation for the continuous and uniform improvement in life-saving in the United States, while by other criteria of social status we would seem to be retrogressing or at least barely holding our own? The answer seems to me to rest in two major characteristics of the public health movement. No other department of local government is so exclusively concerned with the application of biology to social ends. Education has gradually replaced legislation, information based on experimental evidence has replaced traditional authority, the influence of intelligent self-interest has replaced the coercive power of the law. It is the introduction of the medical sciences into civil organization, and the use of learning instead of laws, which have distinguished the health department of today from all other functions of local government, except perhaps that of the public schools. In a notable address last February in Philadelphia before the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Dr. Thomas Parran, Jr., the health officer of the state of New York, expressed the gist of the matter as follows:

"Public health is founded upon scientific discoveries which are comparatively recent. There is an inevitable cultural lag between the acquisition of knowledge and its application to the community; and, although the desire for life and health is a basic human emotion, the absence of disease, the prevention of an epidemic, the saving of a life, are rated as negative accomplishments. They are not dramatized in the public consciousness. For a long time statesmen have expressed the thought that the care of the public health is a primary responsibility of government. Blackstone interpreted the legalistic aspect when he said, 'The right to the enjoyment of health is a subdivision of the right of personal liberty, one of the absolute rights of persons.'"

These concepts mean that the community collectively should perform for its citizens (1) those services which are so important to the social organism that they cannot safely be left to the initiative of the individual, uneducated or indifferent to their importance, and (2) those services which, because of their nature, the individual cannot provide for himself.

It is as characteristic of young functions of government as it is of youth itself that rapid growth of knowledge should reveal its vitality. Public confidence and support have followed closely upon satisfaction in the results already achieved. As soon as automatic or traditional belief has given way to a rational conviction in the new truths experimentally proved and practically demonstrated in village, city, and state, preventive

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